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July 5, 2012

WASHINGTON – Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02) praised passage of bipartisan, compromise legislation today to reauthorize our nation's highway programs as well as extend the current interest rate of 3.4 percent for federal Stafford student loans for one year.

The House of Representatives passed the conference report for the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act (H.R. 4348) by a vote of 373 to 52 this afternoon. Without Congressional action today, important highway programs would have expired tomorrow and the student loan interest rate would have doubled for new loans starting on July 1, increasing costs for students who are already struggling to find jobs in a weak economy. The measure must now be approved by the Senate, which is expected to consider the bill quickly.

Bass said:

"I'm glad that the House and Senate have finally come to an agreement to ensure vital highway programs and the student loan interest rate remains intact. For too long, both bills have been subject to political posturing on both sides of the aisle.

"Today we have a bipartisan plan in place to ensure highway projects across the country, including many in New Hampshire, such as the I-93 widening from Salem to Manchester and the rehabilitation project on I-89 between exits 15 and 17, can move forward. This two-year extension will give states and local communities the certainty and stability they need to plan construction projects, a win for our economy and the safety of our roadways.

"I'm also pleased that Congress was able to work out a solution and ensure students and their families won't see their loan rates double overnight. In this tough economy, the last thing we should do is allow student loan interest rates to rise and burden families with higher debt."

For several months, Bass has been calling on House Leadership to bring a bipartisan plan to the House floor to extend the highway bill and the current student loan interest rate. In March, Bass joined two other Republicans and three Democrats [to send a letter to House Leadership](#) urging them to reconcile any differences and take up the House version of the Senate Highway Bill (S. 1813, the Mobility, Access and Progress for the 21st Century Act, or MAP-21).

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